

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ELIMINATING THE)
PROPOSED HIPPOPOTOMAS EXHIBIT)
IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE METRO)
COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDED LIST OF)
PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED BY METRO)
BALLOT MEASURE 26-96

RESOLUTION NO. 11-4283

Introduced by Acting Chief Operating Officer
Daniel B. Cooper with the concurrence of the
Metro Council President Tom Hughes

WHEREAS, Metro adopted Metro Resolution No. 08-3945 on May 8, 2008 (“Submitting to the Voters of the Metro Area a General Obligation Bond Indebtedness in the Amount of \$125 Million to Fund Oregon Zoo Capital Projects to Protect Animal Health and Safety, Conserve and Recycle Water, and Improve Access to Conservation Education; and Setting Forth the Official Intent of the Metro Council to Reimburse Certain Expenditures Out of the Proceeds of said Bonds Upon Issuance”); and

WHEREAS, Exhibit A to Metro Resolution No. 08-3945 lists a package of recommended projects forming the basis of the referral of the ballot measure to the voters, and among others, item 8: “More Efficient and Better Habitat for Hippos,” called for a “modern filtration system,” “passive water heating,” and a “new exhibit design” (the “Proposed Hippo Project”); and

WHEREAS, the Proposed Hippo Project was not set forth in the Ballot Title or Ballot Measure Summary, as were other mandatory projects, but was suggested in the Ballot Measure Explanatory Statement as an example of the type of project that could save water, reduce pollution and improve water quality; and

WHEREAS, during the Oregon Zoo Comprehensive Capital Master Planning process, (1) an assessment of the zoo’s overall electrical power use revealed that the highest usage is for exhibits that require water pumps and filtration, and that despite anticipated water savings, an adequate water filtration system for the hippos would have extensive power needs, placing it at odds with the Ballot Measure’s sustainability goals; (2) it was discovered that, due to space constraints, it is not feasible to expand the hippo exhibit and keep the rhinoceros exhibit; (3) hippos cannot share exhibit habitat space with rhinos or other animals because they are aggressive and territorial; and

WHEREAS, the nearly complete the Oregon Zoo Comprehensive Capital Master Plan anticipates an Africa savanna exhibit in which several African plains species would share habitat, providing visitors with a greater appreciation of these animals in a more natural setting, and rhinos can be safely combined with giraffes, gazelles and zebras while Hippos cannot be so combined; and

WHEREAS, rhinos are a highly endangered species, the Oregon Zoo is a recognized rhino breeding facility and a member of the rhino Species Survival Plan under the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Oregon Zoo is currently planning to breed rhinos, and hippos are not currently considered a threatened species; and

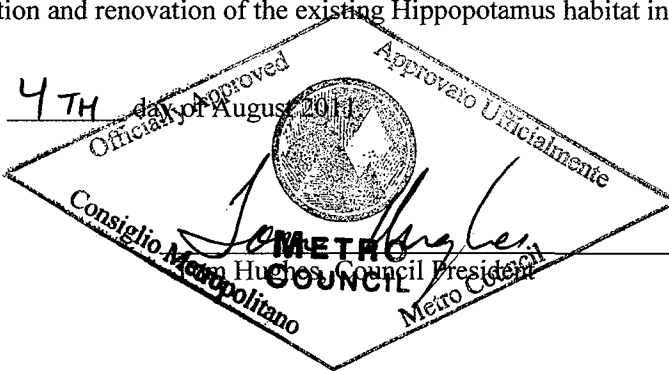
WHEREAS, Metro staff polled members of the public attending Oregon Zoo Bond Measure public open houses, and most of those participants polled supported the elimination of the Proposed Hippo Project under the circumstances set forth in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, for the reasons stated in this resolution, the Oregon Zoo Bond Advisory Group advised Metro staff to recommend to the Council the removal the Proposed Hippo Project from the list of recommended ballot measure projects; and

WHEREAS, for the reasons stated in this resolution, Metro staff recommends that the Metro Council remove the Proposed Hippo Project from the list of recommended Ballot Measure projects, decommission the existing hippo pool, and make the necessary exhibit modifications and safety improvements to open the existing hippo space to rhinos; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Metro Council hereby eliminates the proposed Hippopotamus exhibit improvements from the Metro Council's recommended list of Ballot Measure 26-96 projects set forth in Metro Council Resolution No. 08-3945, and acknowledges the resultant elimination of the Hippopotamus from the Oregon Zoo's species collection and renovation of the existing Hippopotamus habitat into expanded habitat for Rhinoceros.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this



Approved as to Form:

Alison Kean Campbell, Acting Metro Attorney

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 11-4283, FOR THE PURPOSE OF
ELIMINATING THE PROPOSED HIPPOPOTOMAS EXHIBIT IMPROVEMENTS
FROM THE METRO COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDED LIST OF PROJECTS TO BE
FUNDED BY METRO BALLOT MEASURE 26-96

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BACKGROUND

On November 4, 2008, the Metro Area voters approved Ballot Measure 26-96 (the "Oregon Zoo Bond Measure") to support improvements to the physical environment and operation of the Oregon Zoo with \$125 million in capital improvements. The measure's supporting materials included the description of improvements to the existing hippo exhibit. The improvements were primarily focused on water savings.

- The project purpose was defined in a pre-design phase:
 - The existing hippo pool needs to be drained, cleaned and disinfected regularly to keep harmful bacteria from affecting the health of the hippos. The 36,000-gallon pool is drained and re-filled on nearly a daily basis.
 - The zoo will save approximately 4.8 million gallons of water each year by installing a new filtration / treatment system.
 - The existing hippo exhibit is too small to allow the animals to have interaction with other species.
- The expected impacts / effects of the project:
 - A new water filtration system will treat and recycle water in the exhibit.
 - Passive heating systems will warm the water.
 - Natural substrate and compatible African species in a larger exhibit will provide the hippos with a more natural and healthy habitat.

Zoo staff and design consultants together explored options for improvements to the hippo exhibit as part of the Comprehensive Capital Master Planning project. The master planning process provided an avenue for considering the hippo exhibit in the context of the entire zoo and its collection and the entire program of bond funded work, envisioning the next twenty years of zoo operation. This work identified challenges to improving the hippo exhibit:

- An assessment of the zoo's overall electrical power use revealed that the highest usage is for exhibits that require water pumps and filtration (Steller Cove water systems). Despite anticipated water savings, an adequate water filtration system for the hippos would use a lot of electricity, placing it at odds with the bond's sustainability goals.
- An adequate water filtration system and habitat for hippos is very expensive.
- Although a larger pool would be built, the water would be recycled and there would actually be a reduction in water use.
- Due to space constraints, it is not feasible to expand the hippo exhibit and keep the rhino exhibit. One species will leave the zoo to provide space for the other.
- Hippos are not suitable to exhibit with other mammals in a shared habitat because they are aggressive and territorial.

Recognizing these inherent challenges to the hippo exhibit improvements and recognizing that the zoo cannot retain both the hippo and rhino exhibits, zoo management and keepers considered the tradeoffs:

- The zoo's new twenty-year master plan includes plans for an Africa savanna exhibit in which several plains species would share habitat, providing visitors with a greater appreciation of these animals in a more naturalistic setting. Rhinos can be combined with giraffes, gazelles and zebras. Hippos cannot.
- Rhinos are a highly endangered species.
 - The Oregon Zoo is a recognized rhino breeding facility and a member of the rhino Species Survival Plan under the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
 - The Oregon Zoo is currently planning to breed rhinos.
- Hippos are not currently considered a threatened species. If the zoo were to breed hippos the exhibit would require improvements.

To review Metro's legal commitment to perform certain improvements under the measure, Metro consulted with outside bond counsel. Counsel assessed and provided guidance that the hippo project is not discussed in the bond ballot title and was included in the supporting documents as a project that could advance the ballot title focus on saving energy and water. There is not an explicit commitment to install a hippo filtration system. Rhino-associated improvements would need to focus on improving animal welfare.

PUBLIC OUTREACH OBTAINED:

This issue was presented to the Oregon Zoo Bond Advisory Group and members supported eliminating the hippo filtration project.

- In March and April, the issue was posed to the 225 master plan public open house participants and most supported eliminating the hippo filtration project.
- In May, the zoo solicited public opinion through Metro's Opt In public outreach survey tool. More than 90,000 individuals were invited to complete a zoo-focused survey that included this issue. Of the 4480 who responded, 2241 responded to questions concerning this issue.
 - After reading some challenges to managing the hippo exhibit, respondents were evenly split between agreement and disagreement or being unsure.
 - However, after reading about benefits to rhinos, six in 10 agreed that the hippo exhibit should be replaced by an expanded rhino exhibit. ["strongly agree" (31%), "somewhat agree" (33%)]

OPTIONS IDENTIFIED:

1. Proceed with the modifications to the hippo exhibit, as described by the bond supporting materials.

- Rhinos leave the zoo
- Water savings are achieved but overall sustainability goals are not due to high energy use for the new filtration system.
- The high cost of the project impacts the scope of other bond projects.

2. Delete hippo exhibit from the bond work and leave both the hippo and rhino exhibits as they are now.

- Sustainability goals are not met. Water use continues at the current level in the hippo exhibit.
- Hippo and rhino exhibits remain at their current sizes.

3. Eliminate the hippo exhibit from the bond work and make minor modifications to expand the rhino exhibit with bond funds.

- Hippos leave the zoo and their existing exhibit pool is decommissioned.
- Rhinos have an expanded habitat (at a low cost).
- The zoo maintains a highly endangered animal.
- Sustainability goals are met.
- A multi-species exhibit would be possible and included in 20-year zoo master plan.

After reviewing all of the information and obtaining public views, staff recommends pursuing option 3.

ANALYSIS/INFORMATION

1. **Known Opposition:** None known.
2. **Legal Antecedents:** Ballot Measure No. 26-96: Bond to Protect Animal Health and Safety, Conserve, Recycle Water
3. **Anticipated Effects:** The Zoo Bond Program will exclude improvements to the hippo exhibit and pool, decommission the existing hippo pool, and make the necessary exhibit modifications, animal welfare changes, and safety improvements to open the existing hippo space to rhinos. Hippos will leave the zoo. The campus modifications align with the master plan vision of a mixed species Africa savannah exhibit.
4. **Budget Impacts:** Bond funds will remain committed to completing the other improvements identified in the bond measure. Some funds will be required to decommission the existing hippo pool and to make the necessary exhibit modifications, animal welfare changes, and safety improvements to open the hippo space to rhinos. The amount is unknown but is expected to be less than \$1 million.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Metro Council resolve that the Zoo Bond Program exclude improvements to the hippo exhibit and pool, decommission the existing hippo pool, and make the necessary exhibit modifications, animal welfare changes, and safety improvements to open the existing hippo space to rhinos.